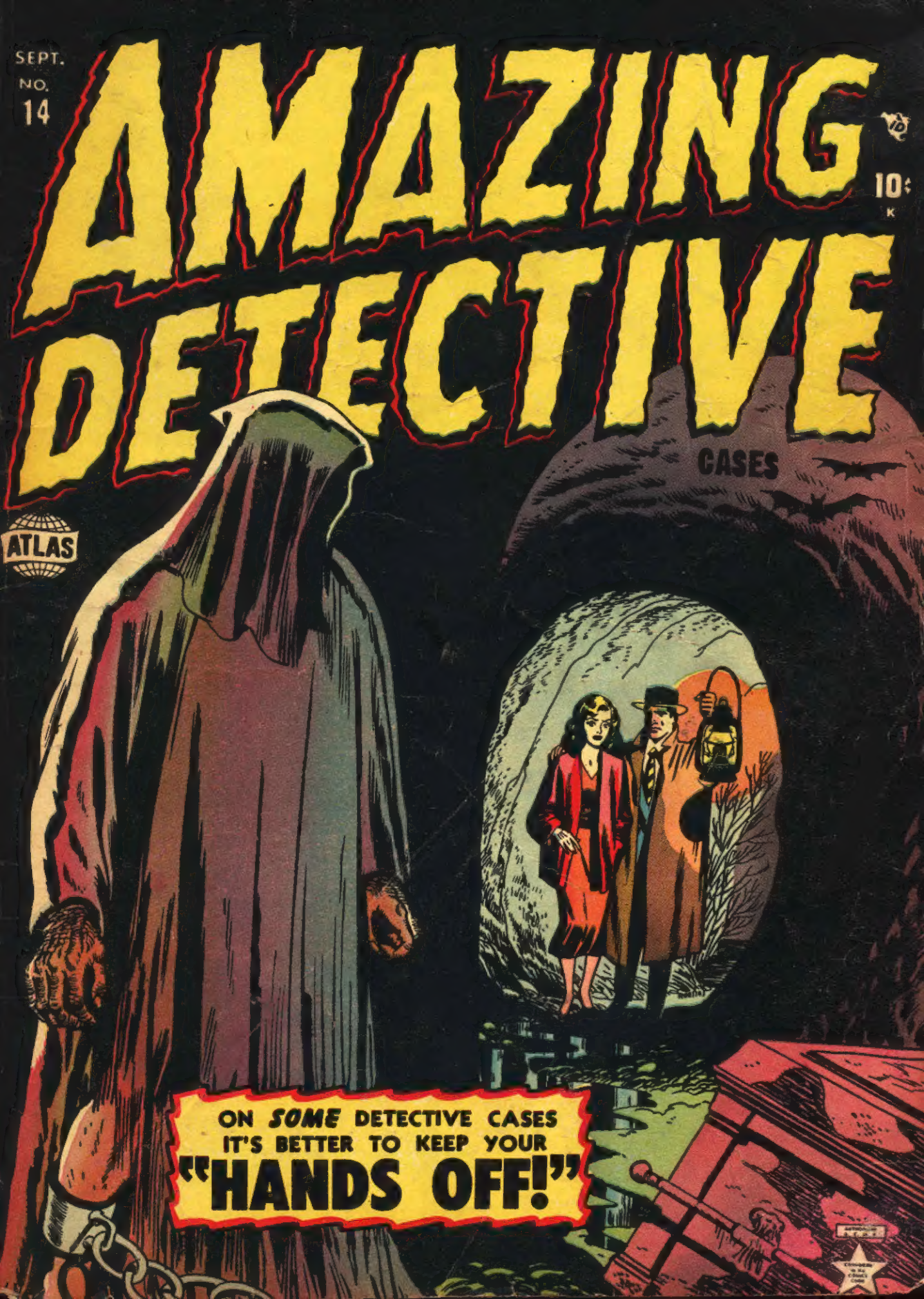

SEPT.
NO.
14
AMAZING
DETECTIVE
CASES
10¢
ATLAS
ON SOME DETECTIVE CASES
IT'S BETTER TO KEEP YOUR
"HANDS OFF!"

THE WEASEL RETURNS!

IN A THIRD-RATE HOTEL IN NEW YORK, WEASEL DIAMOND, A WOULD-BE BIG-SHOT AND MINOR RACKETEER, PREPARES TO LEAVE FOR THE EVENING...

YOU GOIN' OUT, BOSS?
I HOPE MY DEAR HUSBAND AIN'T GOIN' TO TICKER SLADE'S DIVE! THAT 200 BUCKS YOU GOT IS ALL THAT STANDS BETWEEN US AND THE POOR HOUSE!

DON'T WORRY...THIS TIME I'LL TAKE HIM FOR ALL HE'S GOT AND WE'LL BE ON EASY STREET!
YEAH... YOU'LL WIN! LIKE ALL THE OTHER TIMES WHEN I HAD TO PAWN MY WEDDING RING SO'S WE'D HAVE SOMETHING TO EAT!

ALL NAMES AND PLACES IN THESE STORIES ARE FICTITIOUS
ANY SIMILARITY BETWEEN ACTUAL PERSONS OR PLACES AND THOSE USED IN THESE STORIES IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL

ARRIVING AT SLADE'S "BLUE CHIP CLUB," DIAMOND IS CONFRONTED BY TWO OF SLADE'S MEN, MOBSTERS OF LONG ACQUAINTANCE...

TWO HUNDRED SKINS, WEASEL? FOR YOU THAT'S A FORTUNE! WHY DON'T YOU GO HOME WHILE YOU'RE STILL EVEN?
I DON'T NEED YOUR ADVICE! TONIGHT'S GONNA MAKE UP FOR ALL THEM LOSING ONES! I CAN FEEL IT!

WEASEL'S FIRST BET AT THE ROULETTE TABLE IS A WINNING ONE! AS HE EAGERLY REACHES OUT FOR THE CHIPS, "TICKER" SLADE APRROACHES...

WON YOUR FIRST BET, WEASEL? THE BOYS TELL ME THIS IS GOING TO BE YOUR BIG NIGHT! WELL, GO EASY ON ME! REMEMBER, I GOT A WEAK HEART.. HA, HA, HA!
LOOK, SLADE, I AIN'T BOTHERING YOU! I'M A LEGITIMATE CUSTOMER! WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE ME ALONE?

BUT AS THE EVENING PROGRESSES, WEASEL'S WORDS TAKE ON AN ALMOST PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE AS HE WINS WITH AMAZING REGULARITY!

WEASEL'S HEART BEATS WILDLY AND SWEAT STANDS OUT ON HIS FACE AS HIS INCREDIBLE LUCK CONTINUES UNABATED...

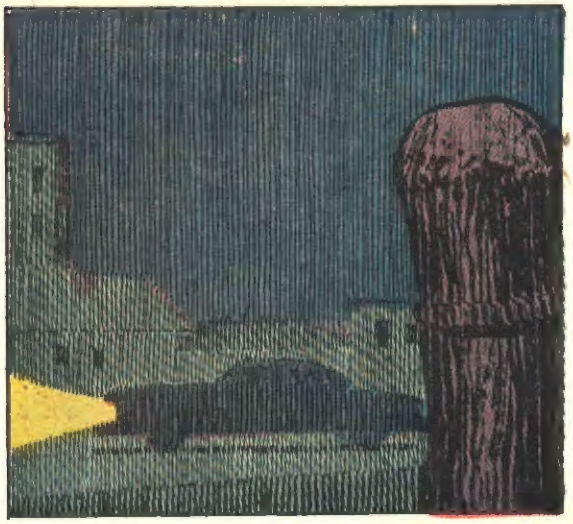
BY SUPREME EFFORT OF WILL, WEASEL MANAGES TO TEAR HIMSELF AWAY FROM THE GAMING TABLES...TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS AHEAD...

YOU'RE A PUNK, WEASEL... A YELLOW PUNK! I NEVER SHOULD HAVE LET YOU IN HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE!
LOOK, SLADE, I'M QUITTING WHILE I'M AHEAD! I AIN'T GONNA TAKE NO CHANCES LOSING THE PILE I GOT!

WEASEL, STILL SHAKEN AND INCREDULOUS AT HIS UNCANNY LUCK, FOLLOWS SLADE INTO HIS ORNATE OFFICE!

AND AS WEASEL WALKS TOWARD HIS RUN-DOWN HOTEL, THINKING OF THE AMAZED INCREDULITY THAT WILL GREET HIS RETURN...

IN A MATTER OF MINUTES, THE BLACK LIMOUSINE ARRIVES AT A DESERTED WATERFRONT PIER...

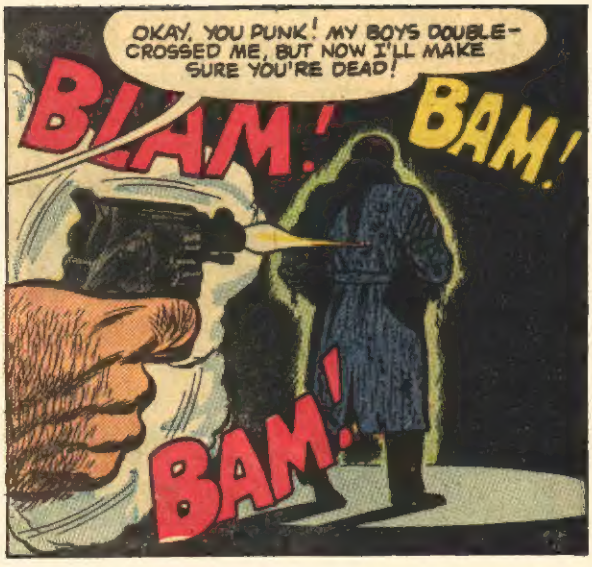


AND A FEW MINUTES LATER...

SLADE'S MEN REPORT BACK TO THEIR CHIEF... THEIR VICIOUS WORK DONE...

MEANWHILE, WEASEL'S DISTRAUGHT WIFE ARRIVES AT THE DESERTED PIER IN ANSWER TO A MYSTERIOUS PHONE CALL...

FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND SMACKERS! THIS REALLY PUTS ME ON EASY STREET, SLADE! THANKS!


OKAY, YOU PUNK! MY BOYS DOUBLE-CROSSED ME, BUT NOW I'LL MAKE SURE YOU'RE DEAD!
BLAM!
BAM!
BAM!

NO... YOU...YOU'RE A GHOST... AHHRRRG... MY HEART...

AAGGHHHHH!

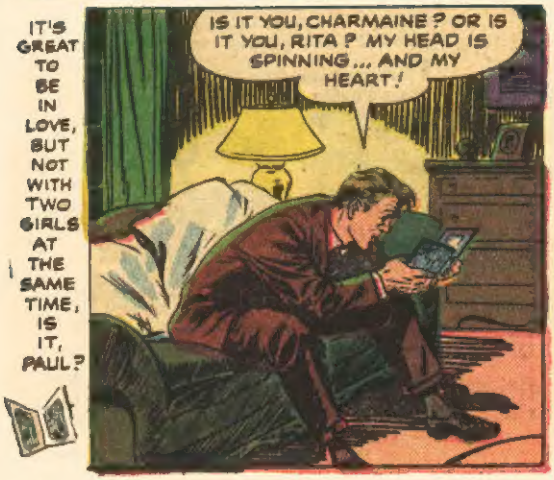
THANKS AGAIN FOR THE FOUR HUNDRED SMACKERS!

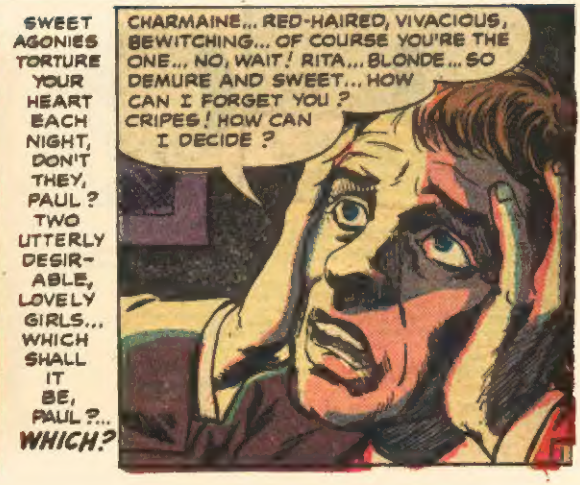
AT THAT MOMENT, IN ANOTHER SECTION OF THE TOWN, TWO PEOPLE SIT UP WITH A DEAD MAN...THE DEAD AND BATTERED WEASEL DIAMOND!
WE CAN'T KEEP HIM HERE, MONK! BETTER CALL THE MORGUE...
THEY TOOK HIS WALLET AND HIS MONEY! SAY...LOOK, SHERRY, A CHECK!

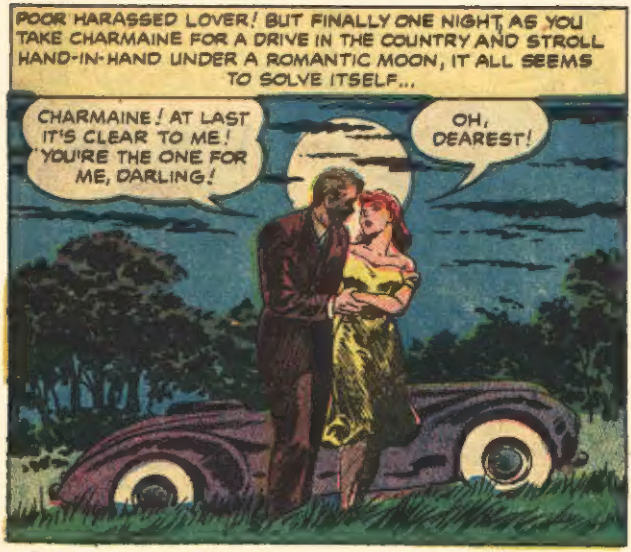
A CHECK...FOR FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS! AND SIGNED BY "TICKER" SLADE!
THE END

WHICH IS WITCH?

YOU CAN'T SQUIRM OUT OF IT, PAUL PAINTON! YOU CAN'T ESCAPE THE MOST VITAL DECISION OF YOUR LIFE! YOU HAVE TO DECIDE... WHICH IS WITCH?


IT'S GREAT TO BE IN LOVE, BUT NOT WITH TWO GIRLS AT THE SAME TIME, IS IT, PAUL?
IS IT YOU, CHARMAINE? OR IS IT YOU, RITA? MY HEAD IS SPINNING... AND MY HEART!


SWEET AGONIES TORTURE YOUR HEART EACH NIGHT, DON'T THEY, PAUL? TWO UTTERLY DESIR-ABLE, LOVELY GIRLS... WHICH SHALL IT BE, PAUL?... WHICH?
CHARMAINE... RED-HAIRED, VIVACIOUS, BEWITCHING... OF COURSE YOU'RE THE ONE... NO, WAIT! RITA... BLONDE... SO DEMURE AND SWEET... HOW CAN I FORGET YOU? CRIPES! HOW CAN I DECIDE?


POOR HARASSED LOVER! BUT FINALLY ONE NIGHT, AS YOU TAKE CHARMAINE FOR A DRIVE IN THE COUNTRY AND STROLL HAND-IN-HAND UNDER A ROMANTIC MOON, IT ALL SEEMS TO SOLVE ITSELF...
CHARMAINE! AT LAST IT'S CLEAR TO ME! YOU'RE THE ONE FOR ME, DARLING!
OH, DEAREST!

RITA FADES FROM YOUR MIND LIKE A FORGOTTEN DREAM, AND YOU PLEDGE YOURSELF TO THE BEWITCHING CHARM OF THE GIRL IN YOUR ARMS...
DARLING, PROMISE ME YOU'LL FORGET RITA...FOREVER!
FOREVER, I SWEAR! I'M YOURS, YOU LOVELY WITCH!

YES, SHE IS LOVELY, ISN'T SHE? YOU STROLL ON WITH HER, IN HEAVENLY BLISS, LITTLE REALIZING WHAT WORDS YOU ARE SAYING...
LET'S BE MARRIED SOON, PAUL...QUICKLY...BEFORE YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO THINK OF RITA AGAIN!
WHATEVER YOU SAY! YOU'VE BEWITCHED ME! YOU'VE GOT ME IN YOUR SPELL!

ONCE MORE YOU SEEK HER LUSCIOUS LIPS, SO FULL AND CRIMSON, WHEN SUDDENLY YOUR BLISSFUL IDYL IS SHATTERED BY RUDE SHOUTS!
OH, YOU ADORABLE WITCH... I... WHAT'S THAT?
HEY, YOU TWO! BREAK IT UP! WE'RE HUNTING DOWN A WILD CRITTER!

FARMERS! BUT WHAT ARE YOU HUNTING? A WOLF OR A BEAR?
NO, SOMETHING FAR WORSE, MISTER... A WITCH!

LISTEN TO THESE SUPERSTITIOUS HICKS, WILL YOU? A WITCH! WHAT IS THIS? THE MIDDLE AGES?
DON'T LAUGH, MISTER! OUR COWS GAVE SOUR MILK TONIGHT! THAT'S A SURE SIGN OF A WITCH AROUND... AND MAYBE IT'S YOUR GAL FRIEND!

CHARMAINE? YOU IDIOTS! SHE'S THE GIRL I'M GOING TO MARRY! HOW DARE YOU ACCUSE HER OF SUCH A PREPOSTEROUS THING...
JUST THE SAME, SON, WE'RE TESTING ALL WOMEN HERE ABOUTS...

BUT AS SHE SAILS OFF ON HER BROOM-STICK, AT LEAST ONE GREAT DOUBT IS SETTLED IN YOUR WHIRLING MIND!
CHARMAINE... AN EVIL, INHUMAN WITCH! SHE BEWITCHED ME! BUT I'M FREE OF HER SPELL NOW! RITA IS MY TRUE LOVE!

BUT AS YOU SEE THE HORRIBLE CREATURE SOARING PAST THE MOON, WHAT OMINOUS WORDS DRIFT BACK FROM HER?
HEE! HEE! NO, IT'S NOT SO EASY, PAUL! YOU'LL STILL HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN US! HEE! HEE! HEE!
3

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE...

YOU LAUGH THE NEXT NIGHT, THINKING OVER THOSE HISSING, LYING WORDS FROM THE WITCH, AS YOU GO TO SEE RITA...
RIDICULOUS! WITH CHARMAINE EXPOSED, HOW CAN I FAIL TO CHOOSE RITA NOW? ALL DOUBTS ARE SETTLED, FINALLY, COMPLETELY!

BUT THEN YOU CHOKE AND STARE IN GHASTLY DISBELIEF, FOR SUDDENLY, FROM A SHADOW...
RITA! THERE ARE TWO OF YOU.. WHAT IN HEAVEN'S NAME?

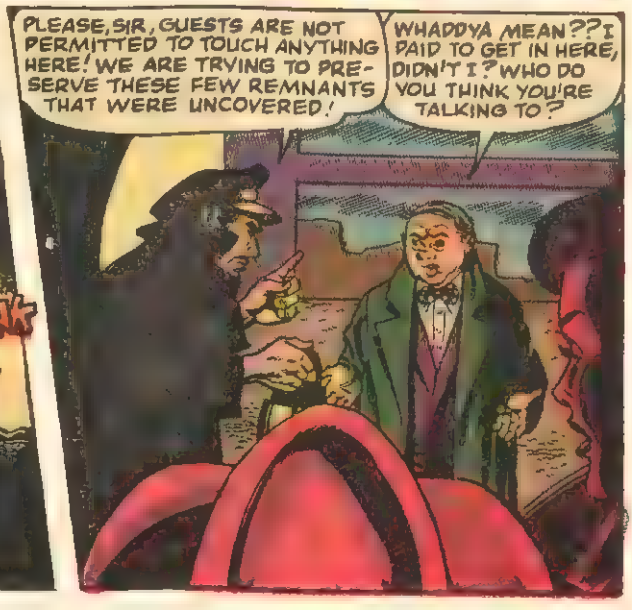
A MOCKING VOICE RISES FROM ONE OF THEM... WHICH ONE?...
A WITCH CAN TAKE ANY HUMAN FORM, PAUL! I TOLD YOU YOU'D STILL HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN US!

HURRY, PAUL! SHOOT AND KILL THE WITCH, OR SHE'LL KILL YOU BOTH IN ANOTHER MOMENT! WHY ARE YOU STANDING THERE, TREMBLING... HESITATING? SHOOT, PAUL... SHOOT!

DEEP IN THE CATACOMBS OF THE ANCIENT RUINS OF POMPEII ARE THE CORPSES OF MANY WHO WERE TRAPPED THERE WHEN THE VOLCANO BURIED THE CITY IN THE YEAR 19 A.D.! LOOK, AND YOU MAY WONDER, BUT... KEEP YOUR...

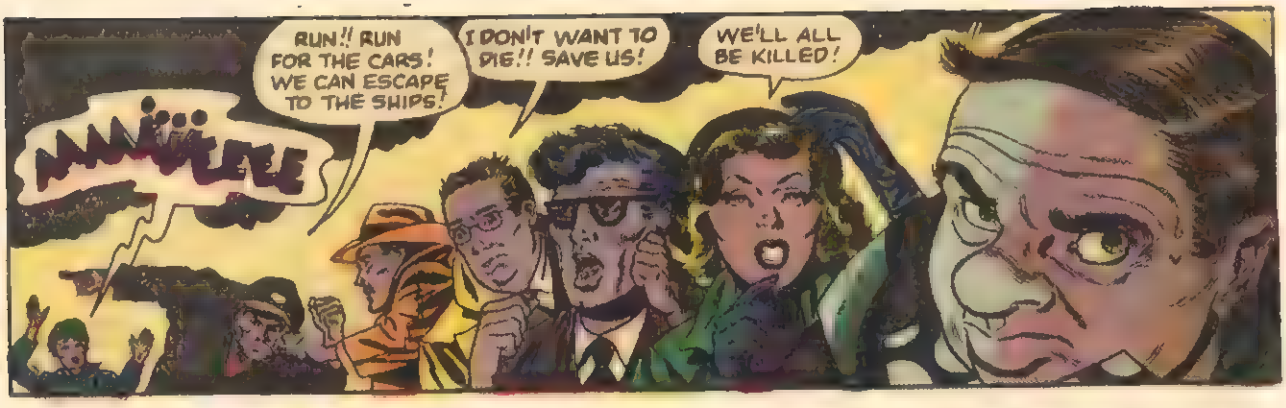
HANDS OFF!

POMPEII!! THE ONCE PROUD CITY, SEAT OF A CIVILIZATION OVER 2000 YEARS OLD, NOW LIES IN ASHES, TO BE GAWKED AT BY THRILL-HUNGRY TOURISTS VISITING ITALY...


PLEASE, SIR, GUESTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO TOUCH ANYTHING HERE! WE ARE TRYING TO PRESERVE THESE FEW REMNANTS THAT WERE UNCOVERED!
WHADDYA MEAN?? I PAID TO GET IN HERE, DIDN'T I? WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE TALKING TO?

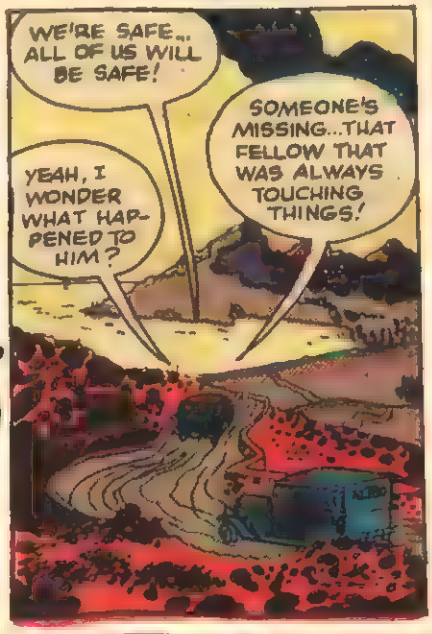
...AND HERE WE SEE A MOTHER AND CHILD THAT WERE TRAPPED BY THE ONRUSHING LAVA, WHEN MOUNT VESUVIUS ERUPTED!
I DON'T SEE WHY HE SHOULD GET SO BLASTED EXCITED, JUST BECAUSE I TOUCHED ONE OF THOSE THINGS! IT'S ALL A FAKE ANYWAY... JUST A PHONY SIDE-SHOW!
OH, NO! THIS ISN'T A FAKE! POMPEII REALLY WAS BURIED WHEN VESUVIUS ERUPTED...
AHHH! HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT? HOW DO YOU KNOW THESE GUYS DIDN'T PUT ALL THESE THINGS HERE JUST TO CHARGE US A FEW GOOD OLD AMERICAN BUCKS?
WHY, EVERYBODY KNOWS ABOUT POMPEII! THESE PEOPLE WERE DESTROYED OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO, AND THESE RUINS WERE JUST RECENTLY DUG UP! I READ ABOUT IT IN THE PAPERS...
THAT LONG? HA! ANYBODY KNOWS THAT THEY'D BE ALL DECAYED BY NOW! YOU'D ONLY SEE A FEW OLD BONES LAYING AROUD!
THAT WOULD BE TRUE IN ANY ORDINARY CASE, EXCEPT THAT HERE THE LAVA PROTECTED THEM FROM THE AIR! IT PRESERVED THEM!
YOU CAN SEE IT'S PROBABLY MADE OUT OF HARD CLAY, OR PAPER-MACHÉ OR SOMETHIN'! I DON'T BELIEVE THESE'RE REAL!
PLEASE, SIR, I'VE REQUESTED BEFORE THAT YOU REFRAIN FROM TOUCHING ANYTHING!
THUD
THUD
THESE TWO DIED IN THE ACT OF MURDER! THEY RECEIVED THEIR PUNISHMENT, ALONG WITH ALL THE OTHERS.. BY THE VENGEFUL VESUVIUS!
SERVES 'EM RIGHT! IT JUST SHOWS THAT NONE OF 'EM HAD ANY BRAINS, OR THEY WOULDN'T HAVE LIVED IN A TOWN AT THE FOOT OF A VOLCANO!!

THAT'S A RATHER BRUTAL THING TO SAY ABOUT THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE THAT WERE BURIED ALIVE BENEATH AN ERUPTING VOLCANO! HAVE YOU NO SYMPATHY?
SYMPATHY? WHAT FOR? LIKE I SAID, IF THEY WERE DUMB ENOUGH TO LIVE IN A PLACE THAT HAD A VOLCANO, THEY DESERVED WHAT THEY GOT!
MR. DENIS, I HAVE ASKED YOU SEVERAL TIMES... WILL YOU PLEASE STOP TOUCHING THESE BODIES!
I WASN'T HURTING 'EM, I JUST...
LOOK! LOOK UP THERE... WHAT'S HAPPENING?
THERE IS A SUDDEN SILENCE AMONG THE VISITORS...
RUMBLE
SHOCK CHANGES INTO DISBELIEF...
RUMBLE
... AND INTO FEAR...
RUMBLE
...AND FEAR GIVES WAY TO SHEER TERROR...
RUMBLE
ALL EYES ARE TURNED TO THE ANCIENT VOLCANO WHICH HAS LAIN DORMANT FOR SO MANY YEARS! THE EARTH TREMBLES IN SHARP, VIOLENT QUAKES...
SCREAMS OF ANGUISH AND PAIN MINGLE WITH THE THUNDEROUS ROAR OF BELCHING LAVA... AS MOUNT VESUVIUS ERUPTS...
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM



A SHORT WHILE LATER, THE TOURISTS ARE CLIMBING FRANTICALLY INTO THE CARS, PRAYING THAT THEY CAN ESCAPE BEFORE THE ONRUSHING LAVA...

THE FAST-MOVING CARS STREAK ACROSS THE ANCIENT ROADS FOR THE SEA IN A MAD DASH TO OUTRACE THE HOLOCAUST!


WE'RE SAFE.. ALL OF US WILL BE SAFE!
SOMEONE'S MISSING...THAT FELLOW THAT WAS ALWAYS TOUCHING THINGS!
YEAH, I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?

DENIS? HE IS STILL IN THE ARENA!

TRAPPED IN THE VALLEY BELOW THE VOLCANO... WHERE ONLY A FOOL WOULD STAY!!

THE STRANGE SMILE

"IT'LL be a cinch, Kingsly. No one'll suspect you, the honest and dependable dick, of anything like this. And you get a cut... a big cut, Kingsly. How about it?"

Detective Kingsly felt peculiarly uncomfortable in this room filled with gangsters of the worst reputations, and he fingered his tie nervously.

He looked around him at the faces that stared, the faces that were all half-smiling, half-scrutinizing. Morey Samson, the man who had just spoken, face scarred with purplish, livid marks, hair clipped short, his body short and chunky, but obviously powerful. Mickey Diamond, the pug-nosed toothpick-like guy in the corner, his hand poised automatically over his gun-belt. The others, all dressed sharply, too sharply... looking at him, waiting, waiting for his answer.

"B-but... well, look, guys... isn't it risky?" Kingsly questioned. "After all, I've got connections in the police force... I know all the guys there... they know me."

"Exactly," Diamond said, "you'll be above suspicion... there's no risk."

"Okay, it's a deal, Samson," he said finally. "You're right... I'll never be suspected by the force, and the people I hit for protection dough will be too scared to talk."

And it was a deal, just like that. Detective Kingsly walked out of the dark, gloomy building an hour later, after discussing and drawing up plans for the proposition that would bring him plenty of money. He wiped beads of perspiration from his face, then laughing suddenly at his needless fright.

"Yep, a cinch, I'll be set for life, and living easy in no time at all," he said to himself as he got into his private car and drove off, being careful no one had followed him here.

On the next morning, Detective Kingsly walked into Pop's grocery and waved feebly at Pop's usual greeting as he looked up from his task of stocking groceries on the shelves.

"Good business this week, Pop?" Kingsly asked, clearing his throat first.

"'bout the same as usual, I'd say," Pop answered, continuing his work.

Then he turned around to Kingsly, noticing his strange unnatural silence.

"Want to keep things going smooth, don't you, Pop?"

"Smooth? Sure... Hey, what's all this about?"

"Just this. There's a little organization I know that offers complete protection for a... modest sum. One half of your take... provides protection against damage... maybe even complete destruction."

"You—you're kiddin', aren't you? No... no, I can see you're not. I don't know how you propose to get away with a thing like this... mister... but I reckon I remember the old days of these protection rackets... and what they can do... so I'll pay. But so help me, some day you'll be caught. Some day..."

Jack Kingsly brought his fist sharply up to the old man's jaw. "Just a reminder, Pop... have the dough ready every Friday for me."

He was on his way. Kingsly made the round of the stores on the block, a fairly busy business section in a bustling town, with the same result. These were all old-timers, who knew, like Pop, what happened if they didn't join the protection organization. They were frightened and shocked, but they paid, that is, with one exception.

Kingsly walked into Mrs. Orko's sewing shop. This was going to be the third time that day, and each time he had threatened the woman with violence, but still she refused to comply. Now he strode in, determined, fierce hatred on his face. He knew the boys wouldn't like it if everyone on the street wasn't included.

"Mrs. Orko... this is the last time... pay up, or you'll be plenty sorry."

The old woman only laughed. The corners of her mouth drew upward, breaking her face into a million wrinkles, and her eyes burned black and

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE...

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determined. "Go away . . . leave me alone . . . go away. I will not pay."

He waited a few hours until darkness fell and the other store - keepers, fearful, had locked up and quickly sped toward their homes. He made a phone call, and as he continued along the street, his heart leapt at the sound of an explosion. The job was done. He knew that on Friday nights, Mrs. Orko stayed late in her shop, balancing her accounts, and now she, and the shop, were no more.

On Monday, late in the afternoon, Kingsly began to notice a strange atmosphere about the neighborhood. There was a tenseness he couldn't explain, but he knew it was something he should investigate for his own peace of mind. He stopped at the grocery shop, and peered in through the door. It wasn't Pop who stood there stacking canned goods. It was a woman.

"Oh NO . . . GOOD GRIEF . . . IT CAN'T BE!" Kingsly gasped. But it was Mrs. Orko . . . the woman he thought was dead. He ran to the next store, and there, too, the door was closed. He peered under the green shade that was drawn half-way down the glass door, and tried to see who it was that stood behind the counter, putting stock on a shelf. Kingsly put his hand to his mouth to stifle the screaming terror he felt.

It's her . . . Mrs. Orko . . . something strange about her, I always thought, and now . . . she's come back . . . back to haunt me. She's dead, but yet she's here. She's everywhere I look . . . everyone I see . . . I . . . NO, I must get hold of myself. There's one thing I can do, and I'll do it now. But before I move away from this territory, I'll let the boys at the station house know . . . rather than have them find out later . . . no sense in taking chances they'll become suspicious of my actions . . . Yes, I'll tell them . . . today."

He hopped into his car and sped through the narrow

streets toward the station house. When he got to the captain's desk, he was breathing hard, and sweat poured down his face.

"Something wrong, Kingsly?" Captain Fredricks asked.

He realized how he must have looked, and stood for a moment, regaining his composure before he spoke again. "I've done so well up to now . . . and no ghost . . . or whatever that woman is, will make me betray myself NOW." he thought.

"W-wrong? Why no, Cap . . . just wanted to let you and the boys know I've moved my office to another territory. This section of town doesn't afford me enough opportunity to show what I can do . . . it's pretty quiet. I'm heading for somewhere else . . . where there's more excitement."

Captain Fredricks smiled peculiarly, and the expression on his face seemed to bring an unexplainable fear to Kingsly's heart.

He made a few hasty "goodbye's", and then left. He couldn't seem to shake the strange foreboding feeling when he remembered the Captain's smile.

He got into the car again, still puzzled. He drove away, and headed for Valley Street. The territory was unfamiliar to him, and his strange feeling made the driving even more difficult. He HAD to get away from the ghost of Mrs. Orko.

"Why was I afraid? What was there about . . . GOOD HEAVENS . . . THAT DROP AHEAD OF ME . . . I CAN'T . . . CAN'T SWERVE . . . AIGHEEEEEEE!!"

The car plumetted out of control, the terror-stricken man inside helpless and screaming. It careened crazily off a cliff, and the car fell swiftly down toward the rocky lakeshore below.

But just before Kingsly blacked out, he remembered. Captain Fredericks . . . who had smiled so strangely . . . he knew . . . for a brief terrible moment, Kingsly saw the face again . . . and knew that the smile . . . was the smile of Mrs. Orko.

THE END A-719

IF YOU WISH HARD ENOUGH... IF YOU WISH LONG ENOUGH... YOU CAN MAKE YOUR WORST ENEMY...

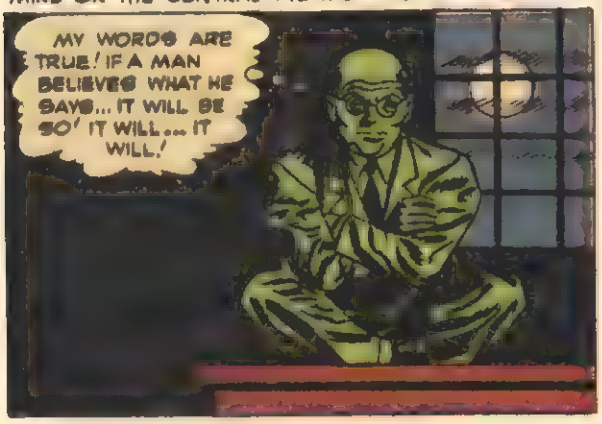
DROP DEAD!

WITH A STRONG WILLPOWER A PERSON CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING! THE HINDU FAKIRS ARE REMARKABLE EXAMPLES OF THIS SCHOOL OF THOUGHT-CONTROL! THEY SLEEP ON BEDS OF SHARP SPIKES...
THEY WALK ON RED-HOT COALS WITH THEIR BARE FEET...
A-583

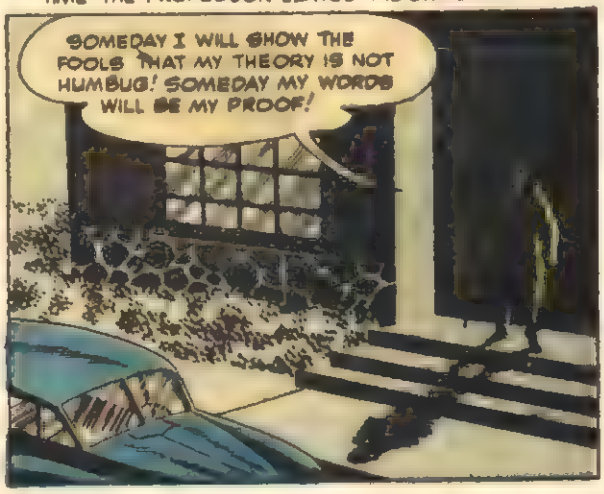
THEY HANDLE DEADLY COBRAS AND ALLOW THEM TO ENTWINE THEIR BODIES WITHOUT ANY HARM WHATSOEVER...
STORY BY HANK CHAPMAN
...AND THEY CAN, PIERCE THEIR FLESH WITH PINS AND SWORDS WITHOUT BLEEDING... BECAUSE THEIR MINDS CONTROL THEIR BODIES! I REPEAT... WITH WILLPOWER A PERSON CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING...
THE OLD PROF IS BUGGIER THAN A TWO-BIT FLOPHOUSE ON THIS PET THEORY OF HIS AN'...

THE ENTIRE CLASS RISES TO ITS FEET... AND FILES OUT OF PROFESSOR ZURKO'S CLASSROOM...

THE PROFESSOR IS LEFT ALONE AND HE TRIES TO HEAL THE WOUNDS INFLICTED TO HIS PRIDE! ZURKO'S MEDICINE IS YOGA... THE WITHDRAWAL OF SENSES FROM ALL EXTERNAL OBJECTS... THE CONCENTRATION OF THE MIND ON THE CENTRAL TRUTH OF HIS PET THEORY...



HOURS PASS IN RIGID SILENCE! IT IS NIGHT BY THE TIME THE PROFESSOR LEAVES THE UNIVERSITY...

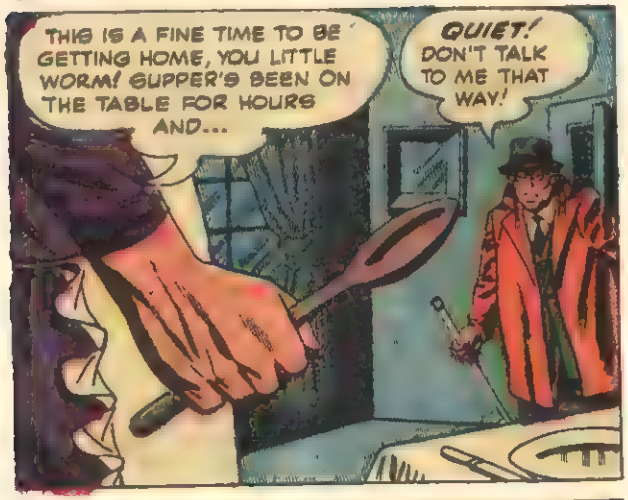


PROFESSOR ZURKO'S ROUTE TO HIS HOME TAKES HIM THROUGH DESERTED STREETS AND DARKENED ALLEYS...

AND IN ONE OF THE BLACKENED PASSAGES...

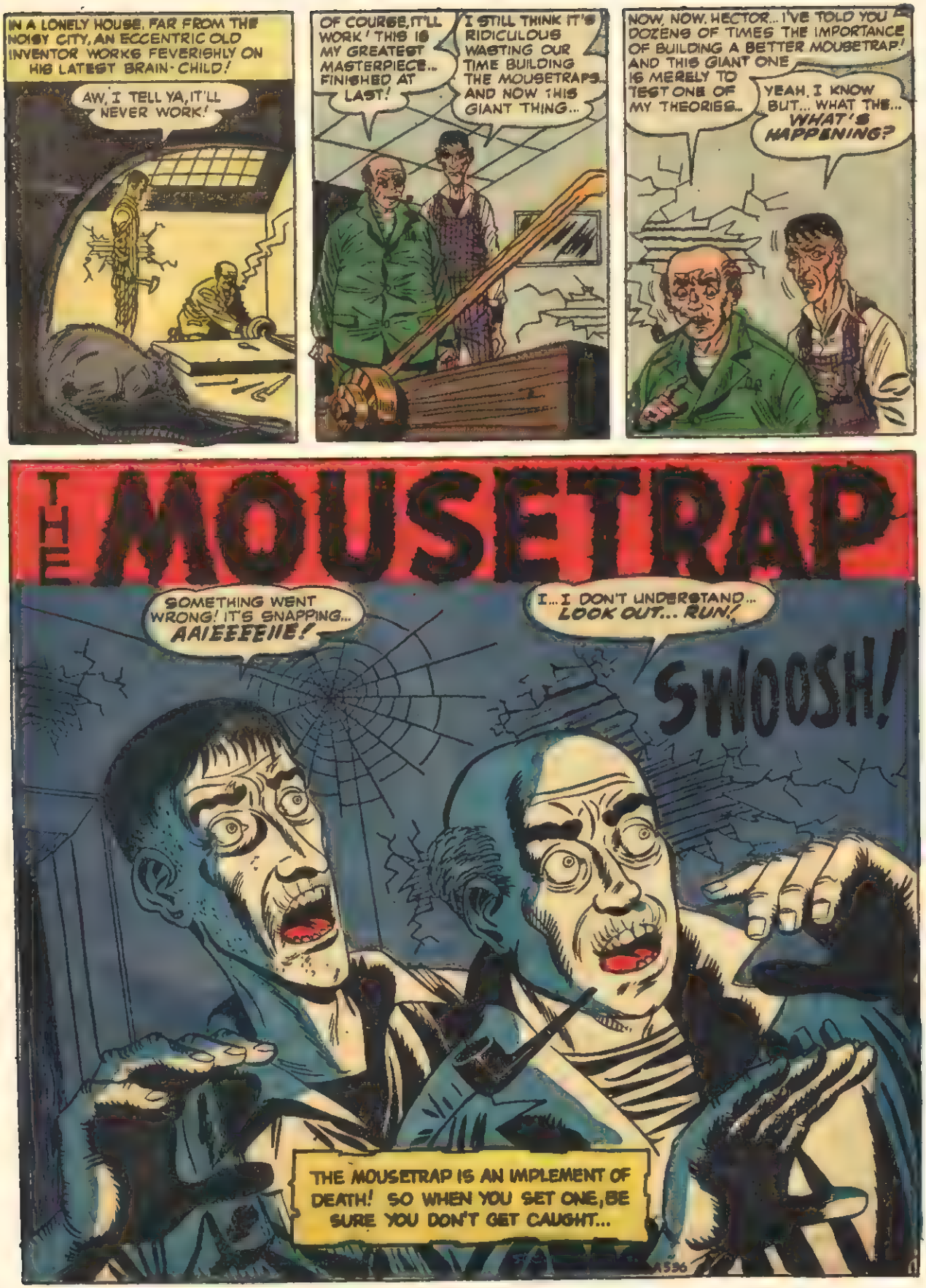
AS IF THE PROFESSOR'S WORDS WERE A COMMAND, THE HOODLUM BEGINS TO CHANGE...
HIS NOSE FLATTENS...
HIS TEETH GROW...
HIS FLESH TURNS INTO A HAIRY FUR...
PROFESSOR ZURKO STARTS TO RUN... AND AS HE RUNS, HE REALIZES THAT IT IS HE WHO HAS CREATED THE GORILLA...
GOOD HEAVENS! I...I DID IT! I CALLED HIM A GORILLA... AND HE CHANGED! IT'S MY THEORY... IT WORKS... IT WORKS!
BUT I'VE GOT TO BE SURE! I...I'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE! I'VE GOT TO TRY IT AGAIN!
AH... HERE COMES THAT BIG BULLY... MY NEIGHBOR, MR. STONE! I'LL TRY IT ON HIM!
GET OUTTA MY WAY, BIG BRAIN... BEFORE I...
DROP DEAD!
I'M CONVINCED NOW!
3

THE PROFESSOR IS ALL EXCITED WHEN HE GETS HOME... BUT HIS NAGGING WIFE DAMPENS HIS ENTHUSIASM... BUT NOT HIS NEWLY-FOUND COURAGE ...



I HAVE THE POWER TO SILENCE YOU FOREVER! FROM NOW ON YOU'LL HAVE TO SHOW MORE RESPECT FOR ME... OR I'LL GET RID OF YOU!
AW-W, YOU AND THOSE PHONY POWERS YOU'VE BEEN HARPING ABOUT FOR TWENTY YEARS COULDN'T GET RID OF THE FLEAS!

BUT IT'D SERVE YOU RIGHT IF I LEFT! YOU'D BE HELPLESS WITHOUT ME! YOU WOULDN'T EVEN BE ABLE TO FIND YOUR SOCKS IN THE MORNING!
STOP IT, CLARA! STOP YOUR INFERNAL NAGGING BEFORE YOU FORCE ME TO GET RID OF YOU!


IN A LONELY HOUSE, FAR FROM THE NOISY CITY, AN ECCENTRIC OLD INVENTOR WORKS FEVERISHLY ON HIS LATEST BRAIN-CHILD!
AW, I TELL YA, IT'LL NEVER WORK!
OF COURSE, IT'LL WORK! THIS IS MY GREATEST MASTERPIECE... FINISHED AT LAST!
I STILL THINK IT'S RIDICULOUS WASTING OUR TIME BUILDING THE MOUSETRAPS. AND NOW THIS GIANT THING...
NOW, NOW, HECTOR... I'VE TOLD YOU DOZENS OF TIMES THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING A BETTER MOUSETRAP! AND THIS GIANT ONE IS MERELY TO TEST ONE OF MY THEORIES...
YEAH, I KNOW BUT... WHAT THE... WHAT'S HAPPENING?
THE MOUSETRAP
SOMETHING WENT WRONG! IT'S SNAPPING... AAIEEEEIIE!
I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND... LOOK OUT... RUN!
SWOOSH!
THE MOUSETRAP IS AN IMPLEMENT OF DEATH! SO WHEN YOU SET ONE, BE SURE YOU DON'T GET CAUGHT...
A596

THE HUGE, STEEL MAW WHIPS THE AIR AS IT CRUSHES DOWN! BUT THERE IS NO HUMAN PREY AS IT CLANGS SHUT ON EMPTINESS...
LOOK OUT, YOU FOOL! YOU'RE STANDING TOO CLOSE TO IT!
OOOFF!
SWISH!
CLANG!
YOU SEE WHAT YOU NEARLY DID, YOU OLD MANIAC? YOU NEARLY MURDERED ME WITH THAT RIDICULOUS TRAP! OF ALL THE IMPRACTICAL, STUPID THINGS IN THE WORLD!
IT... IT WAS AN ACCIDENT! IT WAS JUST TO TEST A THEORY! I CAN SEE NOW THAT A TRAP THAT SIZE WOULD BE TOO DANGEROUS TO HUMANS!
BUT I'VE GOT A NUMBER OF IDEAS NOW THAT ARE REALLY SENSATIONAL! I'M GOING TO BUILD THE GREATEST MOUSETRAP EVER ATTEMPTED! THE PERFECT...
AW, YOU SAY THAT EVERY TIME, AND NOT ONE OF THEM TURNS OUT ANY GOOD! THE WHOLE IDEA OF BUILDING MOUSETRAPS IS JUST A WASTE OF TIME!
BUT THIS IS DIFFERENT, BLACK! I'M REALLY ON THE TRAIL OF SOMETHING HOT... SOMETHING THAT WILL MAKE ME FAMOUS!
WELL, IF YOU WANT TO INVENT SOMETHING, THERE'S LOTS OF THINGS THAT YOU CAN BUILD! I DON'T SEE WHY IT'S GOT TO BE A MOUSETRAP!
BECAUSE A PERFECT MOUSETRAP HAS NEVER BEEN INVENTED... AND IT'S THE KIND OF THING THAT WILL RID THE WORLD OF RATS!
ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! JUST TELL ME WHY WE GOTTA DO IT OUT HERE STUCK IN THIS STINKIN' HOLE, HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY FROM CIVILIZATION!
I'VE TOLD YOU MANY TIMES! WE HAVE A SACRED MISSION TO PERFORM FOR HUMANITY... AND DON'T FORGET THE OLD SAYING... "IF YOU BUILD A BETTER MOUSETRAP, THE WORLD WILL BEAT A PATH TO YOUR DOOR!"
2

ALWAYS QUOTING THAT CORNY SAYING TO ME! YOU KNOW I CAN'T STAND IT WHEN YOU SAY THAT! YOU DON'T REALLY EXPECT PEOPLE TO CARE ABOUT A CRUMMY MOUSETRAP?
AH, YOU JUST DON'T HAVE THE VISION OF A TRUE INVENTOR! I BELIEVE VERY STRONGLY IN THAT FAMOUS OLD SAYING, AND NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'LL GET BACK TO WORK!

BUT TWO DARK, BROODING EYES ARE PINPOINTED WITH HATRED, GLEAMING LIKE SNAKE EYES BEFORE THE REPTILE STRIKES...
ONE OF THESE DAYS I'M GOING TO KILL YOU! I'M SICK OF YOU AND YOUR LOUSY MOUSETRAPS!

THE DAYS PASS QUICKLY WITH MANY NEW ATTEMPTS TO BUILD THE PERFECT TRAP..

SOME OF THEM WORK, BUT ARE IMPRACTICAL...

OTHERS ARE PRACTICAL, BUT DON'T WORK...

SO ALL OF THEM ARE FAILURES...
I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND IT!

FINALLY, HECTOR BLACK REACHES THE BREAKING POINT, AND HE LAYS DOWN HIS ULTIMATUM...
LOOK, RICHARDS... I'M GETTING SICK OF HANGING AROUND HERE WATCHING YOU PUTTER AROUND THOSE SILLY CONTRAPTIONS! EITHER WE WORK ON SOMETHING ELSE, OR I'M GETTING OUT!
SHH! WAIT! I'VE GOT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS TOY MOUSE WHEN I TURN THE SWITCH...

I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND! WHAT HAPPENED? THAT MOUSE WAS SUCKED RIGHT IN...
EUREKA! YES... DON'T YOU SEE? I'VE GOT IT AT LONG LAST! I'VE INVENTED THE WORLD'S MOST PERFECT MOUSETRAP! NOW THE WORLD WILL BEAT A PATH TO MY DOOR!
SWOOSH

A LOOK OF INTEREST GLEAMS IN HECTOR BLACK'S EYES, AND IN THAT SAME INSTANT IS CONCEIVED A PLAN FOR MURDER...
REALLY? HOW DOES IT WORK?
IT'S BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF MAGNETISM... USING ATOMIC ENERGY! INSTEAD OF ATTRACTING THE RAT WITH CHEESE... WE SUCK IT IN BY ATOMIC ATTRACTION!
YEAH, BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW IT WILL WORK WITH A LIVE MOUSE? MAYBE IT'S NOT STRONG ENOUGH?
JUST WATCH AND SEE! THIS ATOMIC MOUSE-TRAP IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO RID THE ENTIRE WORLD OF VERMIN FOREVER!
THE TRAP IS SET IN FRONT OF A HOLE IN THE WALL...
AND BOTH MEN WAIT WITH BREATHLESS ANTICIPATION...
SUDDENLY A RAT APPEARS, DRAWN VIOLENTLY... IRRESISTIBLY TO ITS DEATH...
SWOOSH!
THE PERFECT MOUSETRAP HAS AT LAST BEEN BUILT...
THE OLD INVENTOR IS OVERJOYED! LONG YEARS OF HARD TOIL... AND BROKEN HOPES ... HAVE NOT BEEN IN VAIN!
I'VE DONE IT! I'LL BE FAMOUS! YOU'LL SEE THAT I WAS RIGHT! THE WORLD WILL BEAT A PATH TO MY DOOR!
YEAH, RICHARDS! ONLY YOU WON'T BE THERE TO GREET THEM!
AND WITH A POWER BORN OF YEARS OF HATRED TOWARDS THE OLD INVENTOR, HECTOR BLACK STABS HIM IN THE BACK...
SO LONG, SUCKER...
ARRGGHH!
4

I'VE WANTED TO DO THIS TO YOU FOR A LONG TIME, BUT I HAD TO WAIT UNTIL YOU INVENTED SOMETHING THAT COULD MAKE ME RICH! WELL, THIS'LL MAKE ME RICH! YOU BUILT A BETTER MOUSETRAP, BUT THEY'RE GOING TO BEAT A PATH TO MY DOOR!

WELL, I MUST SAY THE OLD BOY WAS RIGHT! ALREADY THEY'RE BEATING A PATH TO MY DOOR! I'LL SHOW THEM A MOUSETRAP THAT'LL KNOCK THEIR EYES OUT!

BUT HECTOR BLACK'S PLEAS ARE TO NO AVAIL, AS THOUSANDS OF SHARP-TOOTHED RATS, ATTRACTED BY THE BETTER MOUSE-TRAP, SWARM OVER HIM HUNGRILY!

THEY HAVE BEATEN A PATH TO HIS DOOR!